

Loved with Unconditional, Everlasting Love

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- [0 : 00] Romans chapter 9. There are Israelites and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises.
- To them belong the patriarchs and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.
- But it is not as though the word of God has failed, for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they're his offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be named.
- This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said.
- The older will serve the younger. As it's written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then?
- [2 : 04] Is there injustice on God's part? By no means. For he says to Moses, So then, For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I've raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.
- So then, he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, Why does he still find fault?
- For who can resist his will? But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder? Why have you made me like this?
- Has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honourable use and another for dishonourable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he's prepared beforehand for glory?
- Even us, he has called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles. As indeed he says in Hosea, Those who are not my people, I will call my people.
- [3 : 46] And her who is not beloved, I will call beloved. And in the very place where it was said to them, You are not my people, there they will be called sons of the living God.
- And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sands of the sea, Only a remnant of them will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.
- And as Isaiah predicted, If the Lord of hosts has not left us offspring, We would have been like Sodom And become like...
- Why don't we pray now as we come to God's word? Father, I pray that you would help us to see how deep your mercy for us goes.
- And I pray that you would help us to rest in your mercy And to strive for you and holiness in your mercy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.
- [4 : 53] I have been watching on Zoom. I'll have him with us the past two weeks. So hello Zoom people as well.

Well we've spent four Sundays now Swimming in the sovereign love of God. That as we were busy trying to run our lives our own way, Storing up wrath for ourselves for the day of judgment, God stepped in and intervened.

God the Holy Spirit took a hold of us, Changing us on the inside, Calling us effectively to God, Opening our blind eyes to see the wonder of Jesus.

God the Son gladly obeyed his Father, Being sent into the world with a clear mission in mind. As the good shepherd, He died with each and every one of his sheep in mind, Redeeming us, Doing everything to save us.

And that God the Father, Son and Spirit Are totally committed To ensuring that each of Christ's sheep Will make it home to glory. Not one will be snatched out of his hand, Not one will fall out of his hand, Or jump out of his hand.

[6 : 11] We'll make it home to glory, Because God is at work. So we can be sure, No matter what happens in life, That God is working for our good, Preparing us for that glory, Being in his presence forever, Doing that renovation work, Of being conformed in the likeness of his Son.

What God starts, He finishes. These are wonderful truths, Aren't they? It should just fill us with joy and peace, In God, And just overflowing in thankfulness.

What more is there to say? Like, I should just sit down. Sorry to get your hopes up, I'm not going to sit down. There is one more massive truth, Another massive reason to have joy and peace, And overflow in thankfulness.

So to introduce, The topic for this morning, I'm going to ask, Ask this question, When did God the Father, Begin to love me, As his adopted child?

When did God the Father, Begin to love me, As his adopted child? When was it? To work it out, We need to work out, What prompted his love?

[7 : 36] Or to put it more technically, What condition, Did I need to meet, In order for God to begin loving me? So for instance, If God made it the sole condition, That if people really, Wanted to know God, Then they would climb Mount Everest.

That's how they would express it. If you get it to the top, God will give you his love. So that could be a condition. You might think that's totally unreasonable, But frankly, It doesn't really matter what we think is reasonable or not.

It matters what God says is the condition. So what is it? What is the condition that prompted God's love? What did we need to do? Is it our obedience that prompts God's love, The Father's love?

I think this can take a few forms. I think one person might look at it and go, What God the Father really wants, Is for me to seek a deep personal connection with him.

A rich, emotionally rich connection with him. So he wants me to meditate on him. He wants me to connect with him through music and prayer and thankfulness.

[8 : 55] So as long as I'm seeking him in that emotionally rich way, God is there. He's waiting to connect with me. Once I start seeking him, He'll connect with me. Another person might view obedience in terms of, I've got to clean up my moral act.

I've got to clean up my life. Morally, religiously. And then God will love me. Still, I think another person might view it as, I've got to be busy for God.

When I'm busy for God, Serving him, Then he loves me. If I'm not, I can't be quite sure he's pleased with me. I think we can know whichever one we lean towards, Depending on when we feel confident that we have God's love, And when we despair that we don't.

So when we feel confident or despair, What is it? If we think we're measuring up, We'll feel confident. If we think we're falling short, We'll start despairing.

What about when we sin, In the same way this week as we did last week, And for months now, We can begin to ask ourselves, Can God really love me?

[10 : 16] And the more we ask that question, I think that can turn into a bigger question, Did God ever love me? Now, I think most of us here know the gospel message, That it's not about obedience.

Thank God it's not. So what is the condition then? Well, It's faith, Isn't it? We trust in Jesus.

God began to love me, From the moment, I started trusting in Jesus Christ, As my Lord and Saviour. That sounds right, Doesn't it? The moment I put my trust in Jesus, God began to love me.

The Bible is packed with verses, That say faith is the condition, For belonging to God's family. It's just full, Isn't it? But then what about those days, When frankly, I just wish God would, Kind of, Not exist for today.

I want it, I want to spend it my way. Or what if, My faith, In ten years time fails? What happens, To the Father's love on that day, Or that day in the future?

[11 : 39] So what is the condition? What prompts God's love? Let's, Let's turn now to Romans 9. It's one of the most clearly laid out answers, To the question of what condition must be met, For God to save a person.

So please open to Romans 9 with me, On your phone or hard copy. So as Matt introduced, The issue Paul is speaking into here, Isn't exactly our question.

What he is answering helps us to see, What God's basis is, For why one person belongs to God, And another person doesn't. What is the difference there? But the question Paul is answering is, How come so many of God's covenant people, Israel, Didn't believe in Jesus?

If anyone should believe, It should be them. Like, Everything that God gave them, Theirs is the adoption, Verse 4, The glory, The covenants, The giving of the law, The worship, The promises, The patriarchs, From their race came Jesus Christ.

Like, If anyone was primed and ready to believe, It should be them. If your gospel is true, Paul, So many of the Jews, Are condemned.

[13 : 01] Did all those privileges count for nothing? Or more specifically, In verse 6, The question is, Did God's promises, Did God's word fail? What happened to all those unbelieving Jews?

What's going on? So Paul needs to demonstrate, From scripture, That God never said, That all of Israel, Would be saved.

Otherwise, God is, God's word has failed. You can't trust any of his word. He's got to demonstrate, That God never said, He'd save all of national Israel. So if the promises, Don't apply to all national Israel, Then on what basis, Does someone become a child of God?

And that's why we can use this passage, To answer our question. So, Let's have a look at the answer, Verses 6 to 13.

Paul rightly goes back, To the beginning with Abraham, The one who receives God's promises, To be the father of God's very own people, Whom he will bless.

[14 : 06] Now do you remember, How that came about? When Sarah was 90 years old, Picture a 90 year old woman, Having not had any children, Unable to have children, And Abraham 100, And yet God promises them, A son.

Was this possible by human means? This was something, Abraham and Sarah, Could not control.

Yet they tried, Abraham slept with Hagar, And they have Ishmael, But God says, No, Ishmael, I'm not counting, As my son, You will have a son, Isaac.

Paul states the point in verse 8, This means, That it is not, The children of the flesh, Biologically, Who are the children of God, But the children of the promise, Are counted as offspring.

What created the community, Of the children of God? Was it human effort and ability? That was impossible. What was it?

[15 : 32] It was God's word of promise. It was the promise, That created, The child of God. Notice the loaded phrase, The children of God.

This is about belonging, To God's family, The status of being, A child of God. This is about being saved. God counted Isaac, Not Ishmael, Though both were born of Abraham.

It is only those, Who by the direct power of God, Through his promise, Are counted, As the children of God.

And we see it, Even clearer, In Jacob and Esau, The next generation. Again, Rebecca is barren, Totally unable, To create God's people, And the Lord gives her twins.

Now twins, If there's anyone, Who should get the same treatment, It should be twins. There's nothing to distinguish them. Or from a human perspective, If one should get God's favour, And the other not, Then it should be the older, Who should have the privilege, The firstborn.

[16 : 42] But verse 12, What does God say? While the twins are still, In Rebecca's womb, What does God say? The older will serve the younger. God chooses the younger.

Jacob I loved, The younger. Loved in the sense of, Giving all my promised blessings, As a child of God. Esau I hated, In the sense of, He doesn't get, That blessing, As a child of God.

In the human lives, Esau is, Has lots of wealth and things, But in terms of the promise, Of belonging to God's eternal community, Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.

So what did God look at, In these twins, In Jacob and Esau, To decide this? What condition, Did Jacob meet, And Esau fail to meet?

Did God look into their future, And see which one, Would be the best asset, The strongest one, For God's kingdom? If that's the case, He should have chosen Esau by far.

[17 : 57] He was the strong one. But he didn't. He chose Jacob. Okay then, Did God look into the future, Into Jacob and Esau's life, And go, Which one was, The more moral one?

Who trusted God? He had slim pickings there, I tell you what, Esau gave up his birthright, For a single meal, Jacob is just this, Self-interested, Deceptive, Brat, All his life.

Who's he going to pick? It wasn't their own moral effort, Or their faith in him. Paul draws out the point, In verse 11, Please read it with me, This is the basis, Of who becomes a child of God, Why Jacob, And not Esau.

Though, They were not yet born, And had done nothing, Either good or bad, In order that God's purpose, Of election, Might continue, Not because of works, But because of him, Who calls.

What condition did Jacob have to meet, To become a child of God? None. What could he do in the womb?

[19 : 24] Nothing. God made the choice, Before he could do anything, That God's purpose of election, Choosing, Might continue.

So, Applying this to us, What condition, Did I need to meet, For God the Father to love me, As his child?

The answer is nothing, I could do nothing, There is no condition, From the very beginning, Of God's people, It has never been, About what a person does, Or does not do.

So on what basis, Does God save a person? His choice, His sovereign choice alone. The theological term here, Is unconditional, Election.

It's God's choice, It's not about what you do. To put it differently, The reason for God saving you, Doesn't exist within you, It exists within God.

[20 : 37] That is such a wonderful thing, Such a relieving thing. Imagine if God placed, Any condition on us, Even faith, When we remember, That we were born, Hardwired to reject God, Determined to be in charge, Of ourselves, As we saw in Ephesians 2, Dead towards God, Completely insensitive to him, How could a corpse, Fulfill any condition, Placed on it?

Except maybe to smell. The basis of God making us alive, Has to reside within God himself, When we are dead towards him.

So what about faith? Like there's so many verses, About faith. Isn't that the condition to be saved? And on a human level, That's absolutely right.

God says repent and believe. That's a call on everyone in the world. God is saying believe. But the question is though, Is a person's faith what prompts, God to choose them?

Or, Is God choosing a person, What produces that faith? Which way around is it? Remembering Ephesians 2, How could someone, Who is happily, Pursuing their own autonomy, Apart from God, Happily going their own way, The very next moment, Look at Jesus Christ, Who commands total, Sovereignty over their life, How could they find that attractive?

[22 : 26] I love running my own life, Jesus is Lord over your life, That is not attractive, How could that person choose that?

Well consider who's writing Romans 9, Let's see the beauty of this, The Apostle Paul, He was one of the most, Like faith filled people in the world, He's incredible, But that wasn't always the case, Remember how, His, His, Life as a Christian began, He was one of the most, Radically, Aggressive, Violent, Opponents, Of the gospel, On his way, To imprison men, And women, To snuff out, This poisonous lie, That Jesus is the Christ, He hated the gospel, He did not believe a word of it, What happened, For Paul, Did he, On his way, By his own reasoning, And his own, Self reflection, Go, Actually I think there's something in this, I'm going to give it a go, That's not what happened, The Lord had to reveal himself,

From heaven, Literally intervening, In Paul's path, Opening his eyes, To the glory of Jesus, Paul understands, This sovereign grace, Very personally, So is Paul a unique case, In terms of seeing the risen Lord, With his own eyes, Yes he is, But, Is he a unique case, In the sense that, Do we also need, God to reveal Jesus to us, To give a brief answer to that, I'd like to quickly, Think about Matthew chapter 11, It has one of the most beautiful calls, Invitations, To believe in Jesus, Come to me, These are the words of Jesus himself, Come to me, All you who are weary, And burdened, And I'll give you rest, It is one of the most, Winsome invitations, To life in Jesus,

In the Bible, But do you remember, The words that come immediately, Before that, Matthew 11, Jesus praises his father, I thank you father, Lord of heaven and earth, That you have hidden, These things, From the wise and understanding, And revealed them, To little children, Yes father, For such was your gracious will, We all need, God to reveal, The son to us, Faith, Faith, Doesn't prompt the father's love, It's the other way around, The father's love, Prompts faith, If it wasn't, For the love of the father, Choosing to have mercy, No one would be saved, Or to put it positively, When I look at my own faith,

When I look at your faith, I don't go, Oh, Isn't it great, That we chose, I don't marvel, In our own choice, We marvel in the fact, That God had mercy, Thank you God, Thank you God, But this, This teaching can be hard to accept, Can't it, We'll have lingering doubts, Lingering questions, And Paul addresses this, In the rest of Romans 9, Then why doesn't God save everyone, Isn't that unfair, For him to choose some, And not others, That, That just seems really unfair, Doesn't it, Paul is sensitive to this, And he addresses it, In verses 14 to 18, So where in scripture, Does Paul go, To answer this question, He goes to the very heart, And character of God, In the Exodus story,

[26 : 44] When Moses asked God, Please show me your glory, And the Lord passes before him, Proclaiming his name, And the Lord says, I will have mercy, On whom I have mercy, And I'll have compassion, On whom I have compassion, In other words, If you demand justice, From God, What would be right, And just, Is for God to look at the heart, Of every person, Who has ever lived, And see, The rebelliousness, And the sin, And to give us all, The judgment we deserve, Mercy has nothing to do, With justice, Mercy is about, Not giving justice, But what about those, Who are not saved, Like Pharaoh, In the Exodus, Well the Lord is sovereign, There too, He hardens,

Whom he wills, So, In scripture, To have a hard heart, Towards God, Is to be spiritually, Insensitive to him, To not fear him, To not want him, In other words, To be dead, Towards him, As we've already looked at, Which is everyone, Which is all of us, Which is me, Before God intervened, And in the story of Pharaoh, Many times it's said, That Pharaoh hardened, His own heart, In unbelief, So for God, To harden Pharaoh, Is to just give Pharaoh, What he already is, He already is hard, Towards God, And so he leaves him there, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy is given to those, Who don't deserve it, Hardening, Is given to those, Who already hard, Already deserve it, God is free, To leave, People in their sinful condition, As they deserve, And God is free, To choose sinners, To receive his mercy,

To become his children, So I think for us, We're going to decide, What are we going to demand of God, Am I going to demand God, Give me justice, Or am I going to, I'm going to ask God for mercy, Personally, I'm choosing mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Okay, Objection number two, Verses 19 to 29, Okay, So hang on, If the fundamental reason, Why anyone is saved, Is because of God's, Sovereign election, Then why does God, Hold me accountable, For not believing, Why doesn't he, Why does he still, Hold me accountable, Notice what Paul, Doesn't say in response here, He doesn't say, Oh you misunderstand me, God looked into the future, And saw who would have faith,

And who wouldn't, And then he chose those with faith, That's all Paul had to say, To resolve this tension, But he doesn't, He doesn't say that, Notice also, He doesn't give a logical solution, That is very satisfying, To be honest, He doesn't try and explain, How God's sovereignty, And human choice works, Scripture always keeps, Those in tension, If someone rejects Jesus, That's their own doing, That's their choice, Now in these verses, Please understand, Paul isn't shutting down, A person who genuinely, Wants to know how this works, You can ask the question, Absolutely, Instead, He's trying to help us, See the issue from a better perspective, So, Do we as creatures,

Do we as creatures, Have all the information, About a human heart, How it works, And all the information, About God's sovereignty, And how it works, And all the information, About how those two work together, For us to then conclude, God is being unfair, Do you, Do you and I have all the information, I don't think we do, Let's see this, From a different perspective, We need to accept, God's word, That you really do have, A free choice, It's your choice, You are responsible, Let's move away, From focusing on ourselves, And Paul wants us, To focus on God, Let's look at God, In this issue, So let me read, A few of these verses, Who are you, O man, A creature, To answer back to God, Will what is moulded,

[31 : 49] Say to its moulder, Why have you made me like this, Has the potter, So think of pottery, Has the potter, No right over the clay, To make out of the same lump, One vessel for honourable use, And another for dishonourable use, What if God, Desiring to show his wrath, And to make known his power, Has endured with much patience, Vessels of wrath, Prepared for destruction, In order, To make known the riches, Of his glory, For vessels of mercy, Which he has prepared, Beforehand for glory, So Paul wants us to see, First, Remember who God is, As the creator, As the creator, Like a potter, Over clay, He has the right, Over his creation, To make some, For good use, Honourable use, Others for dishonourable use, He's the creator, He has the free choice, There, And second, See the fact, That there is a very good purpose, That God is working towards,

Those remaining in their sin, Reveal God's patience with sin, He is so, When you think about the evil in this world, Even thinking about the war that Matt mentioned, Draw our attention to, All the evil in this world, God is so patient, Or evil in my life, God is so patient, Leaving people in their sin, Reveals God's love, That he is angry, At evil, It would be really bad, If God didn't care, But the fact that he has wrath, Means that, He cares, And it reveals God's power, To judge sin, He is in charge, The world isn't out of his control, He is the judge, So even leaving people in their sin, Reveals God's glory, He is patient,

He is powerful, And he is angry at evil, But all this serves a greater end, It reveals to the vessels of mercy, Just how, Merciful God is, I deserve that anger, He is so gracious, To save me, In other words, God is getting all the glory, He is the creator, And he has good purposes, He is getting all the glory, His grace, Is being, Proclaimed in all the world, And the last few verses, In 24 to 29, Show that God has kept his promises, And he is not stingy, With mercy, He's not holding back, He never said, He would save every single person,

But of national Israel, He says, I will save a remnant, And he has, And he says, Of the Gentiles, The nations of the world, Which I assume, Is most of us here today, That those who are not my people, He will make my people, Look at us gathered here today, Or think of all the churches around the Hunter, Who are worshipping today, He is not stingy in his mercy, Think of China, With over 100 million, Evangelical Christians, Today, Which only like, What is it, 80 years ago, Through, Through the communist revolution, That's incredible, There's so many Christians today, We get a glimpse, Of God's final goal, At the end of human history, In Revelation 7, God's mercy shows, No favoritism,

And it is beyond measure, You can't count it, He's not stingy, We see, We see, A great assembly, Around the throne of God, A throne of God, Revelation 7, Behold, A great multitude, That no one could number, From every nation, From all tribes, And peoples, And languages, Standing before the throne, And before the Lamb, Crying out, In a loud voice, Salvation, Belongs, To our God, Who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, He has very good purposes, In what he's doing, He's not stingy, With his mercy, Being a child of God, Has never been by human means, But by God's sovereign choice, To have mercy on many, So let me pause here, And say, If this idea, Of God's unconditional choosing, Is new to you,

[36 : 55] Or, You're still struggling with it, Keep struggling with it, Keep asking questions, Keep searching scripture, Keep, Let's keep talking about it, As a learning community, I know that this can be, A hard one to accept, But keep searching scripture, Let's take a step back, From the detail in Romans 9, And just see the big picture, When did God the Father, Begin to love his adopted children, When was it?

It wasn't when you started, Seeking connection with God, It wasn't when you started, Obeying God, It wasn't when you started, Having faith in God, It was long before you were born, Long before the earth was born, In God's mercy alone, The Father set his love on us, In eternity past, Determining to make us rebellious sinners, Into his children, Who love to obey him, And delight in him, By his mercy alone, And for those whom the Father chose, To set his love on, The Son was sent into the world, To redeem, The Son chose to lay down his life, For every one of his sheep, Every single one, That the Father had given him, And then in our lifetime, While we're still happily dead towards God, Seeking our own way, We heard the gospel message, God sent the gospel message to us, And the Holy Spirit changed us on the inside, To make Jesus' death for us effective,

Opening our eyes to Christ, Now trusting in him, And delighting in God, Knowing him as our Father, And having glory with him, And being like him forever, That's the goal, We will make it home to heaven, Because God himself, He's taken up residence with us, By his Holy Spirit, Father, Son and Spirit, Are working to make sure, We are conformed to the image of his Son, So that we can delight, In that eternal community, Of Father, Son and Spirit forever, No one will be snatched out of his hand, From eternity past, To our lifetime, Until we reach eternity future, God the Father, Son and Spirit, Are at work, To save his people, If anything was left up to us, Or to me, Man, I would stuff it up, But thankfully, Our salvation rests on one solid thing, The sovereign mercy of God,

Father, Son and Spirit, Now we're going to spend the next four weeks, Answering some common questions, To do with this, But for now, I just want to finish, By asking, What difference does believing, And experiencing, God's sovereign mercy make, What difference does it make?

We could say lots of things, I've just picked five, Firstly, There's no room, For any pride, Whatsoever, All that you and I contributed, Is our sin, Salvation is totally a gift, From beginning to end, There's no room for pride, Secondly, My salvation is certain, My salvation, Your salvation, If you trust in Christ, Is as certain as God the Father, Son, And Holy Spirit, Are unified in their mission, To save, There is no solid ground, More solid ground in existence, To stand on, And because, Our salvation is certain,

[40 : 59] We're free, To love God and each other, If faith was an ongoing condition, For us remaining saved, Then, At least at some level, Everything we would do, In obedience to God, Would be, About staying saved, At some level, In other words, Would be motivated by fear, At some level, But because, Our salvation is totally a gift, And is guaranteed, We're free to obey God, Because he's our father, Because of his mercy, Because we delight in God, And we're free to concentrate then, On the needs of others, So when we sin again, We don't need to be paralyzed by that, But we can rest, And rejoice in his mercy, And keep striving, Thirdly, There's hope, For your loved ones, Who are stubbornly unbelieving still,

There is hope, If it was down to them, To change their hearts, To respond to God, There's no hope in that, But it's not, It's down to God's sovereign mercy, Keep praying, Keep speaking, You don't know, Whom God will save, It's down to his mercy, There is hope, Fourthly, It's motivation to get to work, Let's get on board with God's mission, I like Paul's phrase in 2 Timothy, Here's his perspective on ministry to others, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, Because God is sovereign in salvation, We can give ourselves to helping others, Follow Jesus, Knowing whatever cost that we bear, It's worth it, It won't go to waste,

Because God will save his people, We can join God on his mission, To save, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, And lastly, What difference does it make, To rest, And believe, And experience, God's sovereign mercy and salvation, It means, God gets all the credit, And we just stand in awe of his mercy, If you've put your trust in Christ to save you, You've already joined that heavenly community, Who are praising his grace, It's what we do when we sing, When we gather, It's an expression, We're already part of that heavenly community, So may our lives individually, And as a church community, Be characterised by crying out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God,

Who sits on the throne, And to the lamb, And will you pray with me, Let's pray, Father, Father, I pray that you would help us to rest, And rejoice, In your sovereign mercy alone, And I pray that your mercy would make us confident, That you will conquer our sinfulness, That your mercy is deeper, Is stronger, You will get us home, Individually and as a church, And I pray, Lord, That our mercy will motivate us, To join you in your costly mission to keep saving, And I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.